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SWM COMMUNITY CONSERVANCY PROJECT

newsletter

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WELCOME

Welcome to the second edition of the Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Community Conservancy (CC) Project Newsletter! Now almost halfway through its implementation, the SWM CC Project has made several strides forward in 2022, with the delivery of new vehicles for field staff, the building of infrastructure to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts and numerous training sessions in ecological monitoring, poultry production and livestock ranching.

The SWM CC Project has also strengthened ties with other projects and stakeholders in the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA). In Botswana, the SWM CC Project and Conservation International's Pro-Nature Enterprises project are coordinating their livelihood interventions, notably by jointly hiring an enterprise development officer, Lebo Manson, who will assist small business owners in Habu to secure more opportunities to grow their businesses and attract clients and investors. In Namibia's Zambezi region, the SWM Programme team is working on a Wildlife Credit system as payment to conservancies hosting key wildlife corridors for their conservation efforts. These are critical elements of the SWM Programme strategy in the building of suitable and resilient rural economic models that ensure the long-term sustainability of our interventions and with it, maintain incentives for the sustainable use of wildlife and natural resources.

Manon Mispiratceguy
Assistant Field Coordinator

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HIGHLIGHTS

In each country, we work closely with national authorities and local institutions. We would like to thank all our partners for their involvement and support!! This newsletter builds on the first SWM CC Project Newsletter.

Botswana - Habu

Meeting of the Habu Elephant Development Trust board in Habu.

With the end of COVID-19 restrictions, village meetings have resumed, enabling community discussions on the future and vision of the Habu community conservancy. The Habu Elephant Development Trust (HEDT), the custodians of this vision, recently elected its new board. The new board members, together with the elected members of the Village Development Committee (VDC), participated in a three-day leadership retreat organised by the SWM CC Project to revive their vision for the Habu community and outline their respective roles in realising it. Re-kindling the partnership between HEDT and VDC was a major milestone: the Habu leadership now speaks with one voice, representing the interests of all its members. The leaders also appointed a committee to resolve grievances and disputes raised by community members, both within the context of the SWM CC Project and for their other initiatives.

Other field activities have progressed well this year, with 12 new community scout recruits who will continue running the human-wildlife conflict (HWC) response and patrolling the conservancy area. The new field team member, Mrs Lebogang Manson, will focus on enterprise development and coordinating activities that seek to boost local economic growth for the SWM CC Project and the Pro-Nature Enterprises Project (Conservation International).

Namibia - North-East region

Installation of a crocodile fence in Balyerwa Conservancy.

The Zambezi region is at the heart of the KAZA TFCA, home to dozens of critical wildlife corridors that connect the five KAZA countries. Such large wildlife movements, coupled with a growing rural population in the region, highlight the need to mitigate escalating conflicts between humans and wildlife and ensure that partner conservancies derive clear benefits from the sustainable use of wild animals. Nine out of the 13 SWM CC Project partner conservancies in Namibia are located in the Zambezi region, with a strong focus on creating an enabling framework for the coexistence between people and wildlife.

As part of this strategy, the Project has concentrated on various interventions, such as providing technical support to communities designing zonation plans, which allow for the protection and demarcation of key ecological corridors. In 2022, partner communities impacted by high incidences of HWC were also provided with materials to build 15 new predator-proof enclosures (kraals), eight crocodile-proof fences and over 120 km of elephant tin fencing. The beneficiaries built the installations under the guidance of the SWM CC Project partners in Namibia. In addition, over 50 community game guards in partner conservancies were trained using a new SMART module to investigate and report on HWC incidents.

SPECIAL FOCUS - ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY IN COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

Previously, many community conservation projects in Southern Africa, particularly development initiatives, have fallen into disarray. While community members were consulted about the project interventions and how they should be carried out, they were rarely put in the driver's seat. Although well-intentioned, such initiatives had little chance of achieving lasting change for livelihoods and conservation. In recent years, this realisation has prompted a drastic shift from purely conservation or development-focused initiatives to integrated, community-led approaches.

The Community Conservancy model, supported by the SWM Programme, puts decision-making back in the hands of communities. Elected representatives of partner communities guide the project interventions through their vision and chosen priorities of the people they represent, from securing access to safe water to supporting small businesses and enterprises, and creating additional revenue streams and jobs for community members. Ultimately, the sustainable use of wildlife and natural resources cannot be separated from local economic development and improving the livelihoods of their custodians.

REGIONAL NEWS - KAZA TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREA (TFCA)

In August 2022, KAZA member states (Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe) launched the first-ever synchronised aerial survey of Africa's largest savannah elephant populations. Guided by the KAZA Secretariat and led by WWF, this is the first coordinated effort of its kind. Indeed, a massive USD 3 million operation involving dozens of pilots, survey biologists, analysts, technicians and other support staff, as well as seven aircraft surveyed over 520 000 km_2 of the KAZA TFCA expanse

The latest data estimates that around 220 000 elephants live in the KAZA landscape, more than half of the extant population globally. The data from each member state and the KAZA elephant survey will help determine the numbers and seasonal distributions of elephants, their carcasses, and other large herbivores in the KAZA.

The Executive Director of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism in Namibia, Teofilus Nghitila, applauded the coordinated effort by the KAZA member states: "As KAZA partner states and coordinating ministries, we reaffirm our commitment to the joint pursuit of science-led conservation practices driven by the firm belief that accurate and reliable data is the foundation to informed and strategic decision-making about the long-term protection and management of Africa's largest transboundary elephant population."

Aerial photo of elephants at a watering point.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Fifty-one game guards in Namibian communal conservancies were trained in SMART to patrol and report HWC incidents.

Eight crocodile-proof fences and 16 predator-proof enclosures have been built across project sites in Botswana and Namibia to curb human-wildlife conflicts.

The SWM CC Project covers 14 sites in Northern Botswana and Namibia, encompassing 14 000 km^2 and 33 000 people in one of the most wildlife-rich areas in the world.

EVENTS CORNER

African Coexistence Landscapes (ACL) Project Policy Dialogue

05-07 October 2022, Kasane, Botswana

The SWM Programme has been working closely with other institutions in KAZA, including the UN Environment Programme (UNEP)'s ACL project, to promote cross-sectoral dialogues. In October, stakeholders from Botswana and Zimbabwe gathered in Kasane to discuss key policy actions to enhance coexistence in the Hwange-Kazuma-Chobe, a central wildlife dispersal area of the KAZA region.

SADC Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA) Network Annual Meeting

26-28 September 2022, Pretoria, South Africa

The SWM CC Project team and over 100 delegates from 16 countries convened for last year's meeting to discuss issues pertinent to the development and conservation of Southern African landscapes. The team also co-hosted an exciting thematic session on rural development and livelihoods with the ProSuLi project.

SADC TFCA Network delegates present at the 2022 Annual meeting in Pretoria.

SWM Programme Third Annual Implementation Workshop

21-25 November 2022, Kasane, Botswana

For the first time in three years, the SWM Programme team met in person in northern Botswana. It was a fantastic opportunity to meet and learn about the progress and innovations promoted by other SWM sites in Africa, South America and the Pacific region. Partners had the chance to critically reflect on the successes and lessons learned from Phase one of the SWM Programme and how to scale our impact going forward.

FROM THE FIELD

Benchmarking trip to Nyae Nyae, Gorge Mukoya and Muduva Nyangana conservancies in Namibia, with stakeholders from SWM Programme sites in KAZA.

NEWSROOM

Recent news items include:

- Community Conservancies help mitigate climate change impacts, improve sustainability. Botswana Guardian, 22 April 2022. (click here)
- The Sustainable Wildlife Management Community Conservancies. UN Namibia stories. (click here)
- Namibia's communal conservancies benefiting from various interventions stemming from the SWM Community Conservancy Project. Namibian Farmer, 13 May 2022. (click here)
- Conservancies benefit from wildlife sustainability project. The Namibian, 11 May 2022. (click here)

WHAT'S COMING UP?

- Launch of the video "SWM Community Conservancies in Southern Africa" on World Wildlife Day (3 March 2023)
- 22nd Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). Indigenous Peoples, human health, planetary and territorial health and climate change: a rights-based approach (17 to 28 April 2023)
- International Day for Biological Diversity (22 May 2023)
- World Biodiversity Summit (20 September 2023, New York, USA)

SWM TALKS

Dr Nyambe Nyambe,

Executive Director, KAZA Secretariat

It is an honour to contribute to the second edition of the SWM CC Project newsletter. Our shared belief is that rural communities need to participate in, and benefit from, the sustainable use of wildlife and other natural resources to promote community stewardship. This conviction is at the core of the KAZA vision.

The KAZA Treaty, signed in 2011 by five Partner states (Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe), outlines a path for coexistence in which effective conservation measures cannot be separated from social and economic development and ultimately, human well-being. Although KAZA is mainly known for its spectacular wilderness and wildlife, the reality is that nearly 3 million people live within the region. Most of this population lives in rural areas where jobs and income opportunities are scarce, and in such contexts, without tangible benefits, human-wildlife conflict-triggered tensions can easily escalate into an unbearable plight for both people and wildlife.

We are eager to collaborate with the SWM Programme to advance KAZA's mission in four out of the five KAZA partner states. That being said, looking to the future, it is becoming increasingly clear that to accomplish substantial gains across the KAZA region, partners and donors need to progressively consider boosting Angola's efforts to promote community stewardship and preserve this exceptional landscape.

National partners

Technical partners

FIND OUT MORE

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